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COULD THE WAR HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

BY S. M. MACVANE, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

IN the January number of this REVIEW Dr. Leyds gives the following answer to the question, "How Could the War have been Avoided?"—

"England had acted in such a manner as to render it absolutely unavoidable. The Boers did to avoid it everything that it was humanly possible to do."

The official correspondence shows that any one of three courses, if taken by the Boers, would have averted the war.

(1.) They could have avoided the whole trouble by removing the most oppressive abuses of which the Uitlanders complained. Was it not humanly possible, for example, to have abolished the monopolies, to have improved the police, to have admitted Uitlanders to juries—in a word, to have taken the sting out of their exclusion from political rights by giving them friendly consideration in other ways? Government by a minority can do something to justify itself by trying to be a good government. Minority rule coupled with crying abuses is impossible in the modern world. If there had been no abuses, there would have been no intervention.

(2.) After intervention came, there were still two alternative courses open, either of which would have averted the war. The English Government would have been satisfied with the grant of a subordinate municipal government to the Uitlander community, with the right of managing their schools, police and other local affairs in their own way. This was summarily rejected by President Krüger as a proposal to create an *imperium in imperio*; but that seems a poor reason. Other countries grant such rights; why was it not humanly possible for the Boers to grant them?

(3.) The third alternative was to grant full burghership to such of the Uitlanders as fulfilled certain requirements:

1. Such as had resided in the Republic five years or longer ;
2. Such as had declared on oath their intention to remain ;
3. Such as had acquired property or an income of a certain amount ;
4. Such as had taken the oath of allegiance and sworn to defend the independence of the State.

The new burghers so admitted to have a few members in the Legislature (the First Raad) ; the highest number suggested was five, in a house of thirty-one. Why was this not humanly possible? That it *was* humanly possible is pretty conclusively shown by the Boer offer of the 19th of August, to do even more than this. Unfortunately, the Boers attached to the offer conditions which, however desirable they may have been from the Boer point of view, had no obvious tendency to make the acceptance of the offer by England as humanly possible as it would have been without them. The conditions were that England should (*a.*) accept arbitration, (*b.*) drop the controversy on the suzerainty, and (*c.*) never intervene again. How could acceptance of these conditions make possible a grant of political rights to the Uitlanders? Would there have been less danger of their swamping the old burghers with than without these concessions from England?

Further, England accepted the offered redress for the Uitlanders ; accepted also in substance the first and second conditions ; the other she declined, giving two clear reasons for the rejection of it. The Boer Government replied, saying that the third condition had not been intended to include the cases alleged by England as her reason for rejecting it ; but they at the same time *withdrew the whole offer*, and never afterward renewed it.

Is that so clearly a case of doing all that was humanly possible to avert the war?

S. M. MACVANE.